

1952

# OUTPOSTS

EDITED BY HOWARD SERGEANT

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*Contributors :*

W. PRICE TURNER  
EARLE BIRNEY  
IRIS BIRTWISTLE  
ROBIN SKELTON  
HUGH CREIGHTON HILL  
MURIEL SPARK  
MARGARET STANLEY-  
WRENCH  
WREY GARDINER

ANTHONY THWAITE  
KATHLEEN NOTT  
HARDIMAN SCOTT  
PHCEBE HESKETH  
KATHLEEN GRIFFIN  
MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH  
PHILIP OAKES  
B. EVAN OWEN  
JOHN BARRON MAYS



W. PRICE TURNER

*Journey of the Banished*

DO not upbraid us that our caves are small;  
these are our personal hells, in which we toil  
to scrape the chosen pigments for our art  
from the raw ore—each like a demented Orpheus  
wandering in Lethe, forgetting the quest,  
and still fretting at taut strings for a lost theme.  
Our kind have known incredible times,  
And each, in his own way, can tell of the long  
journey through chaos to a lone peace.  
The upright ones whom the tribe doomed as hermits  
now brood on the symbols they have carved on walls,  
or finger a scar in wonder that the wound  
has healed so well. Now, like the moment  
waking from a dream, when the mind still lingers  
in the timeless fringes, hungering after freedom,  
we feel on our cold flesh the dust of travel,  
tasting again the craving toward martyrdom.  
Now I begin to resurrect within myself  
the crushed, neglected things : derelict fragments  
of my shattered age, though in my cold cave  
I may seem the unmarked grave which all men pass  
with averted eyes. While my blunt chisel  
skids from the rock, I can yet trace the echoes  
of another's labour, my banished brother,  
carving his chronicles on thankless walls;  
and I continue to detect within myself  
the slow foreboding of a dark unease,  
fearing they may come to drag me from my tomb  
and drive me deeper in the earth's entrails.  
For which of us is able to forget  
the clamourous babble when they sought us out,  
the throbbing torches and the smell of tar,  
the yells and curses and their pitiful fear  
of those they banished? I squat now in the darkness,  
remembering the journey to the caves,  
and clinging horror of the missiles thrown,  
the smoke, the chanting, the perpetual drums,  
and all the lepers clanging their damn bells.



## EARLE BIRNEY

### *Maritime Faces*

AS the waters grey, grace meets you  
but only in gulls that hook on the wind,  
are shaken easily loose,  
curve to the curving wave.

Not these the mark of Canada  
nor yet the sentry beat of bergs  
between each fortress fog your ship salutes,  
but here where heads of Hebridean mould  
toss in crusted dories, hard fingers  
sift dour living from the amber fins  
that fleck these longdrowned Banks.

Smell now the sweet landsmell, the spruce in the wind,  
but note, remember, how boxer waves  
bully our shores, battling and billowing  
into the stone's weakness, bellowing  
down the deepening caverns,  
smashing the slate with unappeasable fists.

See these crouched hills at bay with Boreas,  
the old laconic resourceful hills.  
Something of this in the Maritime faces.

## IRIS BIRTWISTLE

### *Orkney Islands : In Retrospect*

MY dream the lupin field,  
Lulled by a thousand years  
Of sheep, and slow intentioned  
Fishermen who farm-carting  
Their herd by boat to casual  
Islands : in quiet spell a crone  
Sculls the load beyond sunset,  
With wild fowl wake in water.

Sky and lupin field are one  
When lamb days deliver light :  
Down from the hills' hunched shoulders  
Roar sudden northern lions—  
Rip cloud and crofter's cottage,  
Lacerate the livelihood  
Of unsuspecting boats—  
Sea horse start of harbour race  
As wrecks rock out to sea.

Wind, smack in the face, blown  
Leaf light to terrible climax.  
Sun shocks staunch disaster,  
Lead back restless island  
And raft to ancient anchorage  
Where peat skirts settle on shag hills;  
And foam bereft, the weed sour  
Water wreathes a crumpled shore.

My dream the ever trusting  
Bird poised in trick elements,  
Whose cry cuts down a fitful  
Breeze, and lulls the lupin field  
And fractious lovers back to sleep.

## ROBIN SKELTON

### *Omen*

**T**HIS is my wisdom. Ask and hear  
the mind move round in a box of fear,  
the spider spin in the parlour.

No-one knows the knock to give,  
or how long the body live  
and love be sown through a bloody sieve  
and the spider spin in the parlour.

This is my wisdom, this my creed :  
man is born of a riddling breed.  
Knock on the door to know your need;  
the spider spins in the parlour.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL

*Triangle In A Semi-circle*

*Non ho parlato . . .*

*. . . del mezzo cerchio far si puote*

*triangol si ch'un retto non avesse . . .*

**B**LACK as god's bachelors the night  
without even a moonface behind  
spreading unrepresentative clouds  
mutters prayers for departed day  
dead as an island under soldiers.

Too late. Perhaps a silver virgin  
could have averted this gloom?

Too late. Maybe the astrologers' risk  
proves too high for the careful underwriters?

Meanwhile, another death : death  
not only to day, and the devil of light,  
to leaves, cheeks of apples, dahlias,  
wreaths enraptured with spiders,  
but also, also, to the comic sins of mongrels,  
mechanical efficiency, the lapsing love  
parading in graceless nudity along  
ecstatic day-dream corridors,  
and possibly (alas?) to the final pleasure,  
solipsist benefits of mystification.

Take then a dark night  
electrified with lust.

Make then a park seat  
satisfy its host.

Collect up the deck-chairs.  
Summer's over.



## MURIEL SPARK

### *A Letter at Christmas*

#### I

SINCE there is only one way I can trace  
a trouble to its peace I formulate  
through you my tremor for the coming Christmas.  
This is a legend of us both and the burden  
is *Ride your ways and discover the miracle.*

Ride, I have ridden by your side  
astride a golden mare, have fired plains,  
boasting her light; and while the illusion lasted,  
hills opened; valleys filled; in the end  
she flashed her hooves' hard guineas and sold us blind.

Knowing the bells will shortly inform you of  
a holy Christmas I would rather come to offer  
a bright mare's mane for your blessing and recount  
you emerald midnights, those delights again,  
than speak these thorns. I would rather search the East-  
ern stars for a miracle than report the fear  
that hangs where the star hides.

This is a legend of us both, but I lay  
our ancient heroes low; it is all over  
with the long loves of Greece and I who made  
truce with atrocious Zeus cannot hear  
with moderation or any kind of tolerance  
how this December has exceeded history.

#### II

This is a legend of us both but a legend  
is never a private matter. We can only  
conceal for a time the import in a riddle  
before confusion finds us out and we  
must ride our ways and discover the miracle.

Tyrant, my intellect, riddled with riddles  
—the harassed juggler whose dexterity  
cannot comply with more than three dimensions—

Threes upon threes are always at his side  
and the figures move in formal trinities.

(Remember we were born in separate humilities;  
remember we were loaded with a cross;  
remember how we woke in clammy tombs,  
—a lifetime, and the seals were opening.)

That is a legend's end, but is not finished,  
and I must tell it again in a different fashion.  
(For we have followed an eccentric star,  
and we have spent an afternoon together  
watching a crucifixion.

There has been  
a night we waited, whispering our senses  
outside a garden, while the Sabbath broke.)

Observed, observer, we must always be  
one or the other, and neither is sufficient.

### III

Christmas is no time but a blockaded place.  
I cannot enter that day, though I have seen  
my child lean out across his frosty sill  
to hear what bell I cannot.  
I see the flower set behind his ear,  
and he sways O sings, the glorious magnificat  
all hallowed breaking from his countenance.

The children are running to Christmas but they will  
(*or ever the silver cord be loosed or the  
golden bowl be broken*), turn their faces  
immortally haggard to the outward gates;  
will drag their broken toys, as we have lately  
handed Cæsar what's his and deviated  
towards our different gods.

Beloved friend,  
we both are exiles now from that far city;  
our long, long loves have fallen all around us,  
and I make this end of a legendary convention,  
I make this end, who would rather relate you Love,  
there is no miracle except we hear  
the city pealing, an alien dimension.



MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

*Kirsten Flagstad, as Brunhilda*

THERE is a crack in the heroic heart,  
The immortal finds, like a cancer, mortality  
Crushing out the splendour, eating away the godhead.  
Dwindled to womanhood, she will not ride  
Again on the wind with her silver-crested sisters,  
But, for a moment, hears, as if from a dream  
The neighing of stallions, but now the sound of their calling  
Brings human sorrow for what is gone forever.  
Vanished the harsh desire for the storm's invasion.  
Already the breast is mild, the arms are ready  
To cradle a child, and the pitiless eye is hooded  
By love, which for her is the leaden face that lies  
On a coin which, tossed, falls like a curse fulfilled,  
Death, and the bright flame quenched in unending night.

WREY GARDINER

*Dirge For The End of Time*

LET us forget the triumphs of time  
And the phases of forgetting  
Seen above the jetties on summer nights,  
Lions browsing on the desert lands,  
Light of love over the lilies of regretting.

Once there was a loving mouth  
Kissed by the hunger of desire.  
Let us scourge our dying flesh ;  
This is the incantation of a dead fire  
Robed in the chemistry of the lyre.

Someday the Sultan of eternity  
Clasped by the whore we call delight  
Will float like an angel of urbanity  
Down to our dirty coverings of night  
Who hate the horrors of truth and light.

Old Europe's Channel Packets have gone down  
Under the ultimate wave of our despair.  
Now we take our journeys in the air  
To the dead ends of living, like the clown  
In the lost streets of the bombed town.

ANTHONY THWAITE

*African Elegy*

To Brian Buckley

NOW as the tide hangs gently on the night  
Out beyond Leptis, and the high blind light  
Of the pharos stares under the moon's long swathe  
Across the waves, I hear the ruffled sand  
Stir with this lukewarm sea's mythologies  
And feel the edge of Africa by my hand.

Carried by the dusk wind, disturbing now  
The soldier in his bed and the Roman prow  
Stirring under the sea's night monody,  
Nudging below the harbour, fathoms down,  
Touches the cold rimmed hills and the frocked palms,  
And I at my window, alone above the town.

Tonight the waves break at the fallen wall,  
Creep by the long arm of the crumbling mole,  
And the insinuations of the sea  
Sliver their edges at the tower-of-cards  
Lighthouse collapsed and stumbled into foam.  
The stars search for the sea. I grate on words.

Tonight earth turns in the warm and tidal night  
Out of the mist and frustration of my white  
Emptiness, and history becomes real  
As a match's flare at my window becomes real  
In the scratch and burst of a second, then  
Is acrid, a stain in the wind, a scarred smell

Of fires at night, and the long sea lean with ships  
Raking the shore. A poem dies in the lips.  
Philosophy and the forum shift and fall  
Over the sophistries and the statuesque  
Gestures of emperors, armless, headless, stacked  
On the high shelves of history, and who can ask

For light as the winged fires tear and spurt and flare  
Out across Troy and Carthage. So the bare  
Parabolas of arches are remote  
And, in their sweep and fall, prove nothing but  
The uselessness of geometry and words.  
The lizard runs. The snake's smashed body rots.

The myths, the songs, the bronzed heroic gods,  
The altars and the speeches and gold words,  
"Posuit" and "imperator", pawed by waves,  
Obliterate, and leave the marble washed  
Smooth as the legions of the whispering stones  
Flung by the trumpeting waves, and rattling dashed

At the feet of the stranded turtle and the log  
Churned out of nowhere, and the lean pi-dog  
Sniffing for fish among the sour rock-pools.  
Here, where the desert and the ocean meet,  
I watch from the cracked tower of my brain  
The broken coast where twenty drifting fleets

Knock at the ocean floor. A star spans sheer  
Out of the threshing wheels into the far  
And cryptic mountains. An answer asks the last  
Question, as I fumble for my bed.  
The cricket stammers from my dusty wall.  
The mindless spider ravel's up its threads.

The voiceless, shapeless soldiers engulf now  
On the grey eastern shores. The guns reply.  
The ruins in the sands hear the deep sea.  
My conscript conscience chafes with sand. And so  
I lie here in the night as the hot wind blows  
With the Mediterranean stars falling like snow.



## KATHLEEN NOTT

### *Absolute Zero*

THERE are no tall engines standing in the polar north,  
or none that is ready for use. They are all  
sheeted and hooded with the snow : who could discern them  
among faceless pines  
and blinded firs?

Yet there are things and forms  
one would hazard only waiting to be stirred  
among this lumber of petrified halls that look  
by the light ruined, as if time out of mind  
ago, they had lost a vaulted and antique branching  
to this faint modern sky : and these not only  
the crashed, spreadeagled and the near-supine  
that lie unvisored from the snow.

For though no visible tombs  
lie out among the palled rocks and no steelmen ever  
sprang from old granite, though there has never been  
any clangour and the place breeds  
nothing but silence, then snow upon the silence  
and silence upon the snow, and even the birches  
leaped silver from an igneous vein, one can feel how tense  
this Spring—and soundless agony might be,  
to heave, to be wholly altered and removed,  
to flutter, though large, and to break pain through snow  
and at last to be seen of eyes, at last, though monstrous or mono-  
lithic,  
and even though inward darkness be perpetual.

For the bosses, dikes and boulders when they break black have  
never,  
too vast and slow for the swift day, space to unlearn  
the dark main time that massed their bergs or to warm further  
than stifling pains in limbs they do not feel,  
with cramped roots stretching beside them, racking withes  
for them, and cruel as snakes that can be happy, curled  
at the foot of a crowned air.

How should they, when iron  
and loadstone mountains are but great earth rising  
with an always shadowed face : the north  
an arrow tangent to the sun, and into sheeted  
panic, a whiteness any sudden night

could set between the living, as if snow  
were a white fire in woods to ward the green one?

A great white belt that was bitter to life  
after the last bird gone to the first leaf  
or squirrel gone to stillness, was by the snow wept—  
sharp tears from a glass-pure heart, disguising again  
their lively signs and notes upon the swathed  
and shapeless. Bitter to life and deadly to all rescue.  
Even the roads appalled at having come so far  
and smitten with the ends of snow. And no one,  
no one any more to love or love with. Dwarf  
men might carry packs and axes and a light heart  
hither, and whistle in the starved woods, but could never  
bring all the burden of the love we need.  
Even the gawky, the lank, the easy machines  
which have dwelt long among the branchless trees on loose warm  
waters,  
would be too tardy at heart.

Must we then leave  
all to the snow, the quiet snow where nothing  
but a light thaw, crumpled and furtive  
and falsely wept from trees, will ever shake and startle?  
And let the snow fall only visibly upon dead snow,  
and let still air imprison us with distance?

## HARDIMAN SCOTT

### *Love Song*

I WATCHED the light in your honeyed hair  
Spun like a web, and drawn  
Like the tenuous lines of a breeze  
Bronzely sketching the corn.

I watched it comb through your lashes,  
Shadow my face in your eyes,  
And write deep in their blue reflections  
The answers of your sighs.

I watched, until like the bloom on fruit  
It trembled on your lips  
And the white song of your breasts, then sank  
Warm in your limbs eclipse.

Under that coronet of light, my darling,  
We drew immortal form,  
For where the body long remembers,  
There our love stays warm.

And there, breathing with the light, my darling,  
I heard our bodies cry,  
But now under that coronet, my darling,  
We new-created lie.

## PHOEBE HESKETH

### *Vision*

NOW the last guest has gone, the silent room  
Extends a friendship that no friend can give;  
And firelight fingers wake the latent bloom  
Asleep in barren walls; and peace uncurls  
Petalled upon the quiet; the curtains seem  
Like veils that scarcely hide a lurking dream.

A picture in its finite frame reveals  
Prophetic trees and clouded hills agleam.  
And calm reflection in the looking-glass  
Shimmers with thought before my hungry gaze.  
A china swan in chill perfection sways  
The moon-cold lilies on a frozen stream.

The air grows luminous and light takes hold  
Of darkness till my searching eyes are filled,  
I see, beyond the Seen, new worlds unfold.

These chairs and tables bear primeval leaves,  
And rustle through the silence with a sound  
Of woods in Autumn till the whole room breathes  
Assurance round the stillness of belief.



KATHERINE GRIFFIN

*Ebb-tide, Langstone*

SECEDING, silent, sucked-away, they sink  
Seeming withdrawn, as forces summoned home  
To stem disaster—blood to heart, to Rome,  
Her outpost legions—thus the waters shrink.

Unhurried, ordered, undefeated here,  
As, only to the fates subservient,  
From forts uncompromised the cohorts went,  
Far out from shore retreats the drowning mere.

From shore to reeds, from reeds to lapsing slime;  
Down mud to runnels dwindling, trickling, drains;  
Stones, piles, abandoning, embedded chains,  
Dominion inch by inch resigns the tide.

And like a people left, long subjugate,  
The sedge-flats, stagnant, know the sea was great.

MARTIN SEYMOUR-SMITH

*The Night Wood*

UNKNOWN, unknown, our love  
To the immortal stars;  
No heaven's garland ours.  
We are at least remove  
From that dark lake  
Whose shores we dare not tread,  
Whose waves we lack,  
Whose boats we cannot ride.

Dark, it is dark here :  
Only the sad light  
Through the trees where  
The branches part

And you and I, so much  
Hand in hand, that we,  
As sad we watch  
The bird-world shore, the empty

Lake, forget desire  
And enter grief : are One  
Among the trees up there,  
And weep alone.  
I see us in one tear,  
Our lips the blood :  
Snow your skin and dark your hair  
In this night wood.

PHILIP OAKES

*Walking on the Water*

WITHOUT a tide or any movement  
sleep surrounds her  
like an island held  
in time and out of time  
by perfect water.  
I would drown  
if I should try to reach her,  
sea would not support  
me, salt would run  
like sap the circuit of my veins  
and coral flower finally  
behind my drifting eyes.  
Her dream has put me out  
to sea and I shall drift  
without a course until she wakes  
and calls me home  
a thousand miles away  
across the room.

## REVIEWS

*The Hardest Freedom* : Sydney Tremayne (Collins, 6s.).

*Reservations* : Valentin Iremonger (Macmillan, 6s.).

*First and Last Poems* : Michael Sloane (Fine Editions Press, \$2.50).

CLARITY of vision, clarity of thought, clarity of expression : Mr. Tremayne is fortunate in knowing all three. His imagery, rhythms, assonances, and the satisfying length of line, are notable features of the elevation of his verses : there may be something lacking in the isometric—is it depth, is it suffering, is it that

“ . . . all this talk is poet's stuff and wildness  
Born of the long dark and the sullen rain?”

Not for this age to say, perhaps? What *must* be said is that here is some memorable work, whether the portrait of the “old sea skipper” in *Post-war Pictures*, a new conceit in *Love Poem*, or the attractive *Soliloquy*, *Leaning over a Gate*. Straightforward, unpretentious, and capable versification such as this claims serious attention.

Poets who win prizes are always suspect, since awardees so rarely look for the things that matter. Mr. Iremonger crosses the Irish Sea wearing a hundred-pound crown, dancing assuredly from

“ . . . the strand at Sandymount, where the tide reminded  
Me of the outside newspaper world”

and he cannot be ignored. His verse is competent, even a little slick; his diction is eloquent, perhaps with too many words; his subject-matter is widely-chosen, where chosen at all. It seems likely that James Stephens and Louis MacNeice have at times smiled behind the nostalgic orchards. But there are attractive poems in this book : and for motto take the middle stanza from *Good-time Girl* :—

“ ‘Him? Oh, he understands. He knows a girl  
Must stagger out a verse to make a rhyme.’  
I thought of Empson and Anita Loos :  
A girl can't keep on laughing all the time.”



How Michael Sloane would have developed as a poet, it is impossible to say. This collection consists of *pensées*, images, sketches, sparklets and remarks which are off-shoots from a sensitive, appreciative mind sincere in its immaturity, fresh and clean in its vision and associations, and simple without awkwardness. "People with hate are in the streets" of New York, "Beauty again takes on its old agony" in Spring in Vermont, "Bedrooms of rotted kings" give away their stones in Eire, and in Paris

"The lamp post leaning children  
of a Sunday night  
know emptiness."

These details and all the verses in this book may not make an important poet, but as a whole show an intense and likeable achievement for one who was lucky enough to die at 18.

HUGH CREIGHTON HILL.

*Farewell Aggie Weston* : Charles Causley (Poems in Pamphlet I).

*A Distant Star* : Charles Higham (Poems in Pamphlet II).

(Published by the Hand and Flower Press, 1s. each.)

*The Shell and the Ear* : Jules Supervielle (Lotus Press, 3s.).

UNFORTUNATELY we are no longer in the Eighteenth Century when, among others, the verses of such a minor poet as William Hayley were to be found "upon every Girl's sofa," during the poet's own life-time. Such a desirable fate is unlikely to befall the work of either Mr. Charles Causley or Mr. Charles Higham, in this dyspeptic age, despite the commendable efforts of their publishers in printing these admirably produced booklets of verse for the price of a quarter of an ounce of tobacco each. If the standard is maintained throughout the series they deserve the patronage of all those who are concerned with the poetry of our time.

Mr. Higham is an accomplished craftsman in words who too often lacks the necessary stimulus to produce anything but elaborate structures that collapse at the critical touch. At his best he can be as impressionistic as the painter Victor Pasmore in his early studies of girls and misty mornings.

" . . . the child is rich  
with love; green fires burn through her to the dress she wears  
and give a fuller meaning to the other street  
where we all are lost beneath our own refusal."

At other times, Mr. Higham appears to have taken to heart Mr. Eliot's dictum—"Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion . . ." and the result is excellent in his translations from Mallarmé, where there is already a surfeit of emotion, but deplorable in those poems where Mr. Higham seems to forget that the poet needs to experience the emotion before he can escape from it.

If Mr. Higham suffers from over-restraint, Mr. Causley does not know the meaning of the term. At his best he reminds the reader of Alun Lewis; at his worst he is a poor imitation of the Louis MacNeice music for bagpipes. There is sincerity and there is depth of feeling in every poem, while the ballads are often very good indeed. I shall look forward to Mr. Causley's next volume in the hope that he will have taken to himself some of that restraint of which Mr. Higham has a surplus.

To pass next to the poetry of Jules Supervielle is to effect a transition from the clinical workroom of the self-conscious amateur craftsman to the forest glade where one of France's finest poets of modern times sits writing his songs and verses fluently, beneath the beneficent regard of Verlaine, Rimbaud, Claudel and Apollinaire. We know too little of this poet and his poetry and this slim selection only serves to tune the ear for the quiet, intense music that lies hidden, awaiting our inevitable attention. The poems given have been translated sympathetically by Marjorie Boulton, but it is impossible for any translation to convey the elusive quality of such a poem as *Cercle* or of the title poem, *Le Coquillage et L'Oreille*. In translation they become empty cages from which the birds have flown.

B. EVAN OWEN.

*Leeds University Poetry* (Lotus Press, 3s.).

*Immunity* : John Dumerecq (Phoenix Press, 5s.).

*Leaves in the Wind* : William McDermott (Gemini Publications).

*The Singing Earth* : Douglas Gibson (Heinemann, 8s. 6d.).

THESE four volumes have many of the graces and the failings of much contemporary minor poetry—obscurity and earnestness, felicity and triteness, conventionality and a nervous straining after originality.



The Leeds University Anthology is attractively produced and is certainly the best value for money. It contains work by established writers like Wilfred R. Childe and James Kirkup which rises to high levels of craftsmanship and vision. But there are times when some of the other contributors seem to mistake formlessness for inspiration and such lines as—

“and yet infrangible  
This umbilical imagery that binds  
The cluttered inadequacy of our minds  
To God, who is intangible”—

from a poem called *Alien* verge perilously on the edge of choppy prose. The book also contains some interesting poems by W. A. Hodges, its editor, and a long poem by Kenneth Muir, newly appointed Professor of English Literature at Liverpool.

From the blurb on its covers we are led to expect John Dumerecq's poems to be a philosophical treatise in verse. Whatever the value of the thought-content may be to a troubled generation, it is purely as poetry that this book should be assessed. Frankly, it disappoints. These sometimes sketchy, half-worked, often titleless pieces are more like the crude ore of poetry than the refined and finished product.

“As absence  
Is made out of presence,  
So what we've got  
Is sometimes as painful  
As what we have not.”

This sort of writing reminds us of Lawrence's *Rag poems*, his *Pansies* and *Nettles*, while lacking their redeeming vitality of genius.

Mr. McDermott, too, has issued into print before the creative process has matured. He has the root of the matter in him but there are many flat, banal passages that mar the total effect of the pamphlet. The inevitable word is too often lacking and there is an absence of rhythmic control. Most of his poems would gain from a critical re-writing. Douglas Gibson's "The Singing Earth" is accomplished within its own slender limits. Too often he collapses into conventional ideas and trite phraseology but at his best in such poems as *Mist*, *The Pear Tree*, *Afternoon in Essex*, he is a pleasing nature poet as his list of periodical acceptances show. *Heredity*, a



taut, well-balanced, short piece, is the best poem in a collection that will appeal to present day devotees of the week-end tradition.

JOHN BARRON MAYS.

*The Oxford Book of American Verse*, selected and with an introduction by F. O. Matthiessen (O.U.P. : Cumberlege, 30s.).

*Mid-Century American Poets*, edited by John Ciardi (Twayne Publishers Inc., New York, \$4.00).

AMERICAN poetry has influenced the work of English poets to a considerable extent since the first World War, and at some points of contact the rapidly developing American traditions have almost merged with those of the British Isles. In the near future it may be that these traditions will draw even closer together, rooted as they are in the same distant past. The two books under review will, therefore, be of the utmost value to English readers, the first because it traces the development of American poetry from Anne Bradstreet (who was born about 1612) to the modern work of Robert Lowell, the second because it provides an excellent selection from the work of contemporary poets. Karl Shapiro, Delmore Schwartz, Randall Jarrell and Robert Lowell, are represented in both volumes.

As the late F. O. Matthiessen's comprehensive anthology shows, there were few poets of any real stature until the 19th century, and until the 20th century only three names stand out—Edgar Allan Poe, Walt Whitman and Emily Dickenson :—

“The land was ours before we were the land’s.  
She was our land more than a hundred years  
Before we were her people. She was ours  
In Massachusetts, in Virginia,  
But we were still England’s, still colonials,  
Possessing what we still were unpossessed by,  
Possessed by what we now no more possessed.  
Something we were withholding made us weak  
Until we found out that it was ourselves  
We were withholding from our land of living.”

(Robert Frost : *The Gift Outright*)

Emily Dickenson, who did not become widely known during her lifetime (her poems were published posthumously in 1890), is shown to advantage in this collection. Poe, though appreciated, had little influence upon the poets of his own country for sixty or seventy years after his death, but in France he was acclaimed as a major poet by Baudelaire, Verlaine and Mallarmé, and his ideas were incorporated in the French theories of Symbolism, to return to America through the work of T. S. Eliot. On the other hand, Mr. Matthiessen remarks, "Whitman's place in American poetry is one of amplitude both of form and feeling." These three, then, were the forerunners to the 20th century which has produced Robert Frost, Wallace Stevens, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, John Crowe Ransom, Hart Crane, Allen Tate, Delmore Schwartz, and Randall Jarrell. It can truly be said that *The Oxford Book* is one of the finest collections of American poetry which have appeared in this country.

Mr. Ciardi concentrates on the poets whose best work has been done during the last 10 or 15 years. An interesting feature of his collection, in which 15 poets are represented, is the foreword by each poet to his own selection of poems, explaining his or her personal principles of writing—or rejection of principles; and the editor's own introduction will be invaluable to the student of American poetry. This anthology provides striking evidence that the American poets are giving increasing attention to form and technique. "They will listen to the authority of sense and talent, as it is, for instance, obvious that all of them have paid homage to Mr. Eliot's poetry and criticism, but once they have listened, they all insist on their own freedom to accept or reject according to their own view."

HOWARD SERGEANT.